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METHODS OF KEEPING THE CITY COUNCIL INFORMED

What techniques may be used to insure continuous and effective reporting to the municipal governing body? What types of reports may the chief administrator use? How can reporting procedures be improved?

"Informing the city council is a continuing responsibility of the city manager." Clarence E. Ridley, in his monograph on *The Role of the City Manager in Policy Formulation*,¹ set forth this principle which applies equally to all top-level administrative personnel, no matter what the form of local government. This report discusses some of the common problems involved in keeping city council informed and describes reporting methods and techniques commonly used.

Council-Manager Relationships

Just as democracy requires an informed electorate voting intelligently, so does it require that elected officials be fully appraised of the matters on which they make decisions. An informed city councilman has an enlarged capacity to govern. It is his prerogative to know what is going on. His constituents do not expect him to keep track of each employee, but they do expect him to be able to answer those questions about which they are concerned.

Where the manager meets the council there is a zone of mutual interaction. It is one in which the administrator's ability to inform council is vital, for the legislators cannot perform effectively without the insight that comes from knowledge. This interaction should be subjected to periodic examination, both by the administrator and the council. A re-evaluation of everyday reporting practices and procedures to determine if they are adequate to meet existing conditions is as necessary here as in any other phase of the administrative process.

A program thrown without warning to a council is not likely to receive council support. Far better that councilmen know about a problem at each step as it emerges from the day-to-day routine and presses forward for solution. The wise manager never dumps a full-blown crisis in the laps of councilmen if it can be avoided. For example, a councilman who knows that the city is receiving more and more requests for sewer lines or more frequent trash collections will not be caught unaware when he is asked to vote on financial proposals designed to cope with these problems.

A program cannot be carried out, of course, until it is approved by council. The administrator must convince councilmen that his ideas have merit. Furthermore, the manager's role in government is oftentimes one of policy initiation; the council's policies and legislative actions usually are based on the factual information submitted to it.

Obviously such a relationship requires sound communication between the administrator and the council.

¹Clarence E. Ridley, *The Role of the City Manager in Policy Formulation* (Chicago: International City Managers' Association, 1958), p. 25.

Basic Questions in Reporting

The administrator faces several basic questions in setting up a continuing program aimed at getting necessary information to the councilmen:

What to Report? Even in the smallest city it is the rare councilman who wants to know everything about everything. Therefore, the administrator must select from among all the day's occurrences, complaints, and activities those to be passed along to council, either for information or action.

In some cases, as in audit reports, the form and content are mandated by state law. But usually it is up to the administrator and the council to decide on the type of information the latter is to receive regularly. Typically, the desires of individual councilmen vary. One or two may read every word of every written report; several others read some reports and ignore others. A few do not read anything. Usually the administrator must gear his report to satisfy those councilmen who want details.

Reports must be complete, but they must also be meaningful. The critical evaluation comes when the administrator is faced with the question, "Should I put in everything, even though it means the report will be too long for the councilmen to read?" In some situations, the manager will do best to get everything "on the record." But he should also remember that conciseness is a virtue.

Who Gets the Report? There are two general rules to be followed in circulating reports: (1) reports should be turned over to all councilmen simultaneously if at all possible; and (2) reports should not be released to other persons in advance of their presentation to the council.

In practice, these rules cannot always be followed. For example, administrators may find it necessary to confer with the mayor before the final draft of a report is prepared. Administrative action on a complaint called to the administrator's attention by a councilman may be reported directly to that councilman. However, the rules are basically sound, and the administrator who regularly violates them will soon be working with a group of councilmen who feel they are purposely being left "in the dark" or are being bypassed.

What Form Should the Report Take? In general, the form of the report will depend on the nature of the subject and the preferences of councilmen. Reports may be written, or they may be presented orally. Visual aids are being utilized increasingly. Many reports combine these techniques.

Purposes of Reporting

In deciding when to report, what to report, the amount of detail to be provided, and the most effective method of organizing and presenting information, the administrator must always keep firmly in mind the purpose of the report. In general, reports fall into one of two groups:

1. Reports Placing Information Before Council. These arise when the administrator believes council should be aware of some fact or condition. The information may be transmitted orally at a council meeting, may be contained in a summary presented in the form of a newsletter, or may be included in a formal written report.

One of the major reports of this kind is the situation report. This presents the progress made since the last meeting on new sewer construction or erection of a public building; it presents the status in the legislature of proposed state legislation affecting municipalities; it includes employee opinion on fringe benefits. It is the product of the need for the manager to stop and say, "Here is where we stand." The manager's annual report to council covering the wide range of city activities is a formal report of this type, but it is by no means the only occasion when it is used.

Another illustration is the report which some administrators provide for new councilmen. Many city managers make special efforts to inform newly elected councilmen about things his veteran colleagues have been doing. One technique has been the "new councilman kit" containing pertinent reports still under consideration, a status summary of major municipal projects and programs,

minutes of recent council meetings, a copy of the city charter, and other pertinent information. This technique recognizes that a new councilman usually brings enthusiasm to his office and is eager to learn about his local government activities. The value of this councilman to the community is likely to be enhanced if he can quickly become a more thoughtful participant in the legislative process.

2. Reports Requiring Action By Council. The second result toward which reports are aimed is action by council, the resolution of a problem. Such a report includes all necessary background relative to the problem, the alternative solutions available to council with their advantages and disadvantages, and often the administrator's recommendation. Depending on the subject matter, this report may be either written or oral or both. Those which might be called "documents" (mandatory reports such as audits and budgets) always are written. Probably the most important report of this type is the city manager's budget message.

Either of these two kinds of reports may become a source of information for the public. The administrator should then be concerned not only with how the report informs council but also with how complete the information is for the public. Oftentimes, because councilmen may be intimate with the background of the problem at hand, they may need only a brief report on the latest phase. But if a large number of people are present at the council meeting, council action based on such a report may appear to them to be hasty action. A short background summary by the administrator may be necessary to place the matter in perspective. If a reporter is present, the administrator should either prepare a press release containing the information or make arrangements to discuss the report with him.

Preparations for Submitting Reports

If the council is to thoroughly understand the numerous and complex problems placed before it, the administrator must have a firm grasp of these problems. Increasingly, the city's departments are headed by technical experts. The manager must explain in nontechnical terms what is being done and what is being proposed.

Channels of communication must run between the council and the operating employees through the administrator. By regularizing the means of collecting information for submission to council, the administrator usually will improve communication. There are several ways to prepare for submission of a report.

Staff Meetings. The overwhelming majority of reports are submitted to council at the governing body's meetings. Therefore many managers hold meetings of department heads a day or two prior to council meetings to go over departmental matters requiring council consideration. At the same time the administrator usually can anticipate questions councilmen are likely to ask, and he can discuss these questions with department heads. If the answer is immediately available, there is still time to get it before the administrator goes before council. Not all questions can be anticipated, but the administrator should try to arm himself beforehand with as many facts as possible relating to a subject expected to come up. In the case of mandated reports a "tickler" file will give sufficient warning of the approaching deadline for each required report.

Informal Council Meetings. An executive session or informal meeting of council prior to the regular meeting is standard procedure in many cities. It has the advantage of permitting preliminary discussion although no formal action can be taken. Such discussion may show a need for additional information to be ready for presentation at the formal meeting. In no case should preliminary meetings be considered a substitute for formal meetings.

Agenda Preparation. Some managers use the agenda as a method of reporting. Where used as a report, the agenda may carry brief notations about various items. These may be description of the status of a project, action taken on a matter discussed at a previous meeting, or the introduction of a new problem for council consideration.

Timing Reports. The "right time" is hard to define, yet the manager should recognize that

upon occasion this will be a crucial point. Up-to-date information on all matters controversial or likely to become controversial should be maintained.

Samuel E. Vickers, City Manager, Long Beach, California, has said on this point:

The element of timing is an important consideration with respect to presenting matters to council. Routine material or reports might be submitted at any given time without particular consequence. For some projects, however, there is, you might say, a right psychological moment for presenting them to council for consideration. Nor should we overlook the fact that the legal provisions relating to recommended proposals must always be taken into account when presenting matters to the policy-making body. Technical legal points which might pertain, for example, to the execution of certain contracts, sale of real estate, or purchase of items exceeding a certain amount, should be fully clarified before they are submitted. The manager is employed to get things done, but he must do so within a prescribed legal and administrative framework.

Subject Matter

A number of factors which influence the type of report to be used have been mentioned. Among them were the mandatory requirements of state and city laws and regulations, the individual councilman's receptivity to oral rather than lengthily written reports, and the administrator's desire to "put it in writing." However, the subject matter is still another influence about which some generalizations may be made.

Magnitude of the Problem. For a report to a councilman concerned about a faulty catch basin at Main and Elm Streets a telephone call or brief memo may suffice. (Some administrators, even when making such a report on a minor problem to one councilman, later report to the entire council). But a study of storm sewer needs in a particular neighborhood may be prepared by the city engineering department and require a minimum of several pages. A consultant's study of the need for a storm sewer system and a special district to finance it would be a lengthy one, accompanied by a summary, sketches of proposed improvements, tables and graphs showing financial impact, and so on.

Citizen Interest in the Problem. This should be weighed not alone by the numbers of those interested. For example, a report on a proposal that all dogs be vaccinated against rabies probably would arouse considerable interest among dog owners. What has to be said about dog vaccination might be said in a few sentences, but complete documentation in a written report will be required. Another example of high interest among a small group is the case of newer residential neighborhoods where property owners demand city services, while the rest of the city is indifferent to things like sewers and water lines. Whatever type of report is selected, it should handle controversial problems in as thorough, detached, and objective a manner as possible.

Nature of Subject Matter. Some matters lend themselves to visual presentation. If councilmen have a photograph of a street in bad condition, they know exactly what is under discussion. A movie on sewage treatment processes would help to explain why equipment at the disposal plant must be expanded. Graphs may give meaning to financial data, whether the administrator supplies the commentary orally or in a printed report.

Weighing these factors, the administrator will come to a point where he must decide which type of report will most likely produce the desired result — an oral summary, an exhaustive formal written report, a brief written report, a memorandum, or any of the less frequently used reporting methods.

Written Reports

Many managers believe that the written report is the best approach, particularly if it is combined with other techniques. According to Ridley, it has these substantial advantages:²

1. It places the manager on record, helps to prevent misunderstanding as to what is said and intended, and permits an unemotional presentation of the subject in advance of a council meeting.

²Ridley, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

2. It is sometimes the only way to present detailed information to councilmen where it is difficult to get council to meet in informal study sessions.
3. It is the best method of explaining a complex problem that has many ramifications and alternative solutions; for example, those problems that have a financial impact upon the community or involve raising revenues for particular projects. In some cases, the administrator feels better to have a permanent record.
4. It is the only method for accurate presentation of certain types of statistical and pictorial data.
5. The written report permits presentation of information to all members of council simultaneously, thus avoiding any impression of partiality or favoritism among councilmen.

Disadvantages. There are two basic disadvantages to written reports.

1. Some councilmen will be reluctant to read the report, particularly if it is lengthy. The reader will want to know what the report means, rather than wade through it.
2. It requires certain skills on the part of the writer. A poorly drafted, incomplete, badly organized, hard-to-understand report will attract little readership.

What Makes a Good Written Report. Ridley's survey among city managers showed three major rules for good written reports.

1. The report should be concise, well written, illustrated where possible, and well documented.
2. The report should be issued sufficiently in advance of the council meeting to give councilmen reasonable time to review the material.
3. The report should be sent only to members of council. The council will decide if the report is to be given further distribution.

Oral Reports

Oral reports are especially useful in calling the attention of councilmen to issues. It is probably the best way to present answers to questions raised at a previous meeting, when such questions do not justify a written report. Some councils prefer brief oral reports to written documents, although managers may follow up an oral presentation with written recommendations on alternative solutions.

The oral report can stimulate council and engender requests for further information, but it seldom can be the only managerial method of reporting. The oral report must be carefully prepared to be most effective. If not carefully presented it may fail to achieve a precise and intended purpose; it may confuse rather than enlighten, particularly where the report is made in public. In such a situation, the manager should keep in mind that he is speaking not only to the council, whose members may be fairly well informed on the background of the problem, but also to newspaper reporters and others who have little perspective. The person making the oral report should be careful to present sufficient material for a basic understanding by all present, with emphasis properly balanced. A lengthy discussion of a minor point should never overshadow the really important elements of a given situation.

Reports by Others. Sometimes managers, usually in the larger cities, rely on department heads to explain technical matters to council at city council meetings. However, most managers try to limit such attendance to those occasions when the situation *requires* that the department head be present.

(A survey of 110 council-manager cities in Michigan indicates that 54 reported that department heads attend council meetings. Of the 54, 21 were cities over 20,000. See Appendix A for a summary of the survey's findings.)

It should be pointed out that most managers believe that council should be presented with an

over-all view, while a department head will see a problem with somewhat narrowed perspective. As a rule, the manager should be sufficiently apprised of a subject to present it to council.

Informal Suggestions to Councilmen

Reporting to only one or two councilmen is a practice fraught with danger for the administrator. He must avoid any taint of favoritism, of telling one councilman and not telling another. There are two general exceptions to this rule, although the manager must be certain the local situation permits even these variations.

1. Answering specific requests of councilmen for information or action on relatively minor-nonpolicy matters. In most cases, a reply directly to the councilman seeking to have a street hole fixed will not cause antagonism. However, some managers include a notation on all follow-ups to such requests in their periodic newsletters so that all councilmen will know about it.

2. Channeling information on a technical matter to a councilman with particular competence in that field. For example, a manager in a small community may make it a practice to confer with an engineer-councilman on public works construction and repair problems. A doctor-councilman might be consulted on public health problems. This practice should be followed only where the other members of the council defer to this councilman on his specialty.

The Role of the Mayor. Some managers, particularly where the mayor is a policy leader, may seek his advice on recommendations to be presented to council or on the timing of policy recommendations. Considerable care must be taken, however, in suggesting policy to the mayor or any other single member of the council with the intent that the mayor or councilmen should carry the responsibility for introducing a measure and pushing it forward to a decision. Ordinarily this is done only when the mayor or a particular councilman is intensely interested in a specific function or project. The entire council must be properly informed on the proposal, and the councilman must be regarded by the other members of the council as a suitable leader in this particular function or project.

The administrator may be tempted to propose a policy indirectly through private citizens, particularly when councilmen, before making funds available, want to know that the project has public support. This method of introducing major policy questions is of dubious value; it has many hazards.

Informal Communications

Phone Calls. Many managers save time by making telephone calls to councilmen. Where there is a small council this is a particularly effective way to tell councilmen about an event before they read it in the newspapers, or where there is a need to keep these officials up-to-date between meetings. Such occasions may arise when the city receives important construction bids, where police have made a raid, when a civic leader has died unexpectedly, where there has been a bad accident involving a city vehicle, or, in general, where there has been a new development in a matter of interest.

Press Reports. Councilmen may not read written reports, but they do read their newspapers. A significant report may be the subject of a news article that both summarizes the report and discusses its implications. Thus, the report containing easy to reproduce charts, graphs, and pictures may have its full impact on some council members indirectly through the press. Councilmen will have received the reports first from the manager, but they may obtain their details from a well-written press report.

City Hall Gossip. Councilmen want to know what the papers are saying about them; they also want to know what the city employees are saying. The administrator should be in a position to hear much that makes the rounds in the city hall. He owes it to the council to pass such talk along when it affects city business. Of course, *discretion is the watchword here*. But a council informed of

dissatisfaction with pay rates in June may be better prepared to cope with pay increase requests at budget hearings in November. Councilmen may want to know what bookkeepers are saying about the lighting in their office when city hall improvements come up for discussion.

Field Trips. A council visit to the scene involved in a current problem is helpful in obtaining perspective for legislative action. It is most valuable when all councilmen attend, but has the disadvantages inherent in any occasion that requires compatibility of schedules of a number of persons. However, one device that may be used is to expand the field trip roster to include a number of civic leaders. In such a case elected officials are likely to go along.

Systematic Reporting

A review of existing reporting procedures may well indicate where improvements can be made. Much depends of course on the personalities and desires of the councilmen. With one group of councilmen, written reports might be beneficial only on special or mandatory occasions. Brief oral reports usually suffice.

However, other councils might want written reports, even though brief ones, on most occasions. Obviously no hard and fast rules can be set. The manager should not waste his time in preparing written reports that are not read, although again there are exceptions. As one manager has said, "Sometimes you have to use a written report and you've got to make sure that the council knows what's in it — even if you have to read it to them at a council meeting."

Whatever the reporting method used, reports fall into two rough categories: periodic and special.

Periodic Reports. The periods covered by these repetitive reports may range from a year, in the case of annual reports and budget messages, to a week, as in the case of the weekly newsletter. Some types of reports issued for fixed periods are as follows:

1. Manager Reports at Council Meetings. During the course of council meetings the manager reports to the councilmen. Often the topics have been the subject of premeeting informal council sessions.

Such reports are usually oral although a prepared sheet with background and recommendations may be distributed to each councilman and reporters. The manager should be careful that in his effort for brevity he does not create a situation in which council appears to be a rubber stamp, even though his report accurately reflects the wishes of the council. Such a report should cover not only the arguments in favor of a course of action, but should also make clear the alternatives that are being rejected and the reasons why. Financial status summaries always are submitted in written reports.

2. Newsletters. The periods covered by newsletters usually are a week or a month, although some cities issue newsletters twice a month. Newsletters are of two types. One is for council eyes only. Such a report can be frank and to the point. In some cases, councilmen also receive copies of newsletters prepared for general distribution to department heads, newspapers, civic organizations, and others, interested in city government

The weekly report of Hollywood, Florida, is a chatty bulletin on municipal activities. It usually has at least one human interest item. Recent issues told about the city's ring of official trees of all the states in front of the municipal building; another told of how the city has to spend funds to trim the coconuts off trees just before the hurricane season. Phoenix, Arizona, also is active in this way. The report often gives long range perspective on problems the city faces. A councilman learns about his community by reading this newsletter. (See Appendix B for description of newsletters issued by several cities.)

Some managers feel that monthly reports are good when there is a large council, or if a large city is involved. The noncontroversial matters of some interest, although not of pressing urgency, can be covered in such a report. Others say that such monthly reports require a lot of work to

prepare on a regular basis. For this reason they prefer the weekly newsletter which can be prepared in a relatively short time using a file of items collected during the week. Such a report need not be wordy or fancy. It may contain short, concise remarks about current activities, report on progress, and summarize activities of the manager. If the newsletter is directed to council only, it can contain information of a specific nature about a specific problem.

Advocates say public newsletters serve the double purpose of informing the public and refreshing the memories of council members. They are valuable as a public relations media in the community. One city manager has said: "They are often useful where city government has had a poor press or when the city is very new or undergoing some profound change."

3. Executive Sessions. Administrators generally believe that informal meetings of the council are indispensable for full and frank discussion of policy matters. The councilman is relaxed because he need not vote; he need not commit himself publically without the benefit of sufficient facts and informal exchange of ideas. These work sessions may be properly regarded as a means of preventing premature commitment to a yes or no vote.

Many managers and councilmen would rather hold such meetings without the press being represented. However, other cities successfully hold such meetings with reporters present on an "off-the-record" basis. Some, as in Dade County, Florida, are open to the public at large without restriction. Some managers feel that the press can obtain valuable background on the day-to-day problems through such sessions without disadvantage if the reporters recognize the exploratory nature of these sessions and that participants are not committed as a result of the discussions.

An executive session is usually called when the problem is one concerning individual employees. Rarely are the shortcomings of the employee discussed at public sessions. Written reports of the manager, department heads, or personnel director to the council on such individual problems usually are not made public. However, some cities provide channels for an employee to state his case to the manager or city council.

The procedures at such executive sessions tend to be informal, although the manager frequently prepares an agenda. Of course any official present may raise a subject not on the agenda. Each agenda item may be supplemented with a written report. If council members agree on a policy at the informal session, administrative personnel may prepare the necessary data and information for a more comprehensive presentation at a regular council session.

The biggest advantage of the informal or study session is that it permits the council to "think out loud", ask questions, and discuss points they might hesitate to raise in formal meetings. The manager for his part can advise the council more frankly and with less risk of embarrassing individual members than would be the case at a regular meeting.

4. Annual Report. In this category fall a number of reports to councilmen (not including the municipal annual report to the public.) The budget message is one example. Audit reports and departmental reports required by law or custom (such as police department crime statistics) may also fit into this category.

Oftentimes, the budget message serves as a progress report. It will spell out both the goals ahead and the accomplishments of the past year. However, where the succeeding budget must be prepared well before the end of the fiscal year, the budget message may give only a partial report on past accomplishments. Many managers present a complete report for the fiscal year as soon as the fiscal year has ended.

Special Reports. Frequently a problem reaches a point where it can no longer be covered adequately in the periodic municipal reports listed above. Special treatment is needed.

Again, the treatment depends largely on the subject matter, but generally the problem will be one in which there is considerable public or council interest. Therefore the manager must prepare his report for public presentation, should council decide to disseminate its contents widely. Further, the highly technical matters — finances particularly — will require humanizing and an explanation of the possible alternative choices open to council. The need for important special reports can usually be anticipated. Some greater attention can thus be given to the form and manner of presentation than is usually the case with the more frequent of the periodic reports.

Visual Reporting

Visual reporting remains a relatively unworked mine of municipal communication. While most people believe that one picture is worth a thousand words, few take the effort to secure the picture.³

Perhaps the best effort is being made in the presentation of financial data by visual means. The pie charts showing where the money comes from and where it goes are effective at budget time. But even more can be done to show visually the trends and statistics which contain the meat of local government activity.

Exhibits. Most written reports would be better with supporting exhibits. These might be charts, graphs, or photographs bound with the text of a report. Take a report about the need to conserve water during a period of draught; a graph showing the hourly fluctuation in use on a typical day could point up the need to restrict car washing and lawn sprinkling at certain hours. A large-scale map of city streets, with overlays of different colors showing the street repairs, sewer construction, water main installation and other public works activity, could be a permanent exhibit, with progress shown up to date.

Photographs. Pictorial presentations are very effective in showing conditions to be discussed by council. Beach erosion, traffic snarled at an intersection requiring traffic signals, equipment stored outdoors because of the need for a warehouse, all are typical of what might be photographed.

The Poleroid Land Camera permits the presentation of pictures to councilmen within a short time after they are taken. A manager could say, "This is the way it looked today." However, there may be occasions when the impact of color slides is needed. It takes as little as four days to process slides in large metropolitan areas. Ordinary black and white pictures may be best if large "blow-ups" are needed.

The council meeting place probably should have a large bulletin board for the display for pictures and other visual materials on the topic being discussed.

Other. The expense of preparing a movie solely for the councilmen may not be justified in any but the largest city, although it is conceivable that this manner of presentation could well best serve the purpose. It would be one showing a basic problem or condition on which council would have to act. Not everyone could go on a field trip to the city's worse slums, for example. A motion picture might be an effective substitute, particularly if it were shown to civic leaders as well as councilmen. Television would seem to hold a certain potential along this line, but little is being done at the present time.

There are several makes of projectors which cast an enlarged image of a map or chart on a screen. Simple chalk drawings on a blackboard may do more to demonstrate the situation than many words. The manager should keep constantly aware of the question, "How can I improve my presentation?"

Choosing the Reporting Medium

The previous pages have indicated some of the choices of reports open to administrators; brief or lengthy, oral or written, illustrated or unillustrated, periodic or special. In most cases, however, the administrator must make several selections to meet the circumstances. Few written reports, for example, would be hurt by an oral introduction. Long ones would be enhanced by an oral or written summary. While an oral report may be best in a given circumstance, it perhaps could stand a single sheet of supporting data to be circulated to councilmen.

The medium should be chosen on the basis of one criterion, "Are the councilmen informed?" If the answer is "No," then another medium should be sought that will do the job.

³The possibilities and limitations of various kinds of visual aids in governmental use are discussed in *Visual Aids for Public Service*, by Rachel Marshall Goetz (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1954. 89 pp. \$3.25). The report has many useful suggestions for preparation of effective, low-cost visual aids for use at all kinds of meetings.

Ridley's survey of 88 managers indicated general agreement on five points: (1) the manager must know the preferences of council members on methods of presentation; (2) the manager must never lay a matter "cold" before the council; (3) informal meetings are indispensable for full and frank discussion of policy matters; (4) both oral and written reports are likely to be used on all important proposals; and (5) oral and written reports must be well prepared, well documented, and effectively presented.

But beyond this, the administrator should keep in mind that councilmen are human too, and that communications is an interaction among people. As Mr. Vickers has said:

We should not overlook the importance of the manner of presentation. No matter how well prepared our reports, their acceptance can be influenced by personal factors which often we take for granted. For example, the quality of patience is a most important one to a manager. As we all know, democratic processes are apt to work slowly. Moreover, we should keep in mind that, initially, council members may not be as fully informed about a given subject as the manager.

It goes almost without saying that the manager should deal courteously and impartially with all individuals involved in the process of presenting matters to council. The manager should try to make his points by means of tactful suggestion rather than forceful argument, and should give credit where credit is due. He should always attempt to stay out of any political disputes or controversies which may arise as a result of matters he has presented to the legislative body....

A sense of humor is essential to the demands of perhaps any job, but it is a "must" in a manager's job. That and a relatively low sensitivity to criticism. The council won't always agree with the manager's recommendation, nor should he expect that they will do so. The manager must, however, maintain a high batting average for making the right decisions, remembering that even Babe Ruth struck out now and then.

Conclusions

An informed council is vital to the democratic process and it is an essential part of the policy-making process. It behooves the administrator to review his reporting procedures and practices when there are signs that existing ones are not serving to inform council as much as necessary.

Many types of reports may be used, but there is no "best" type. The selection should be based on the particular purposes of the report and the personal characteristics and preferences of the persons receiving the reports. A combination of reporting methods usually will have to be used.

A report should be as brief as possible, consistent with the need to fully inform council. In oral reports, particularly, efforts must be made to avoid distortion or misleading emphasis.

Greater use can be made, in most cases, of visual material to supplement reports. There are few reports that could not tell the story better with pictures, colored slides, charts, graphs, and other illustrative matter. Make pictures a habit.

Reports should be prepared dispassionately. But it should be remembered that a disinterested report need not be an uninteresting one.

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Note. This report was prepared by Ned L. Wall, staff member, the International City Managers' Association.

Appendix A

THE ROLE OF THE MICHIGAN CITY MANAGER
IN COUNCIL PREPARATION AND PROCEDURE

(Following is a summary of the results of a survey conducted by Neal Berlin in the fall of 1959 when he was a graduate student at the Institute of Public Administration, University of Michigan. The survey was undertaken under a graduate research assistantship established by the Michigan Chapter of the International City Managers' Association. A total of 118 managers and city superintendents — about 90 per cent of those in the state — responded to the questionnaire. Mr. Neal is now administrative assistant to the village manager of Park Forest, Illinois.)

1. Michigan city managers participate in city council proceedings with a great degree of reserve and discretion.
2. To be most effective in the council proceedings, Michigan city managers feel that they must carry out their duties and responsibilities before the council meeting through the use of an agenda, supplementary agenda materials, the warm-up session, and other administrative techniques.
3. About one-half of the Michigan city managers have their department heads in attendance at the council meetings, but approximately two-thirds of these managers are opposed to the attendance of department heads at council meetings.
4. Most Michigan city managers have their staff assistants in attendance at council meetings, but few of these assistants take any part in the council proceedings.
5. Michigan city managers feel that they have little control over the length of a council meeting. However, they are not worried about the length of council meetings.
6. Over 95 per cent of Michigan city managers use an agenda for council meetings. Nearly all include a quantity of supplementary materials with the agenda.
7. In the more populous Michigan council-manager communities use of an agenda deadline is more frequent.
8. A council warm-up session of some kind is used regularly in over one-quarter of Michigan council-manager municipalities.
9. Over 75 per cent of Michigan city managers present periodic reports of administrative activities to the city council.
10. As the population of the Michigan council-manager municipality increases, there is a greater tendency for the administrative reports of the manager to be in writing.
11. Over one-half of the Michigan city managers distribute their managerial administrative reports to the press and the public.
12. In over three-quarters of the Michigan council-manager communities, the department heads present departmental reports to the city council. In over one-half of these municipalities, the departmental reports are submitted to the council through the office of the city manager.
13. In 87 per cent of Michigan council-manager cities and villages, the city manager has established some type of formal citizen complaint procedure which obviates the need for citizens to appear at the council meetings.
14. The Michigan city manager freely adapts his administrative techniques to meet the changing needs of a community.

Appendix B

CONTENTS OF NEWSLETTERS

To illustrate the kinds of items that managers insert in newsletters, the contents of three typical ones — one issued weekly, one semi-monthly, and one monthly — are listed below. All bring before councilmen and the public items worthy of mention, but not requiring full-scale reports.

Fort Worth, Texas (Monthly)

Census Bureau Tabulation Highlights Low Fort Worth Taxes (a comparison of census data for Texas cities and nation-wide statistics).

Intensive Inspection Program by Fire-Fighters to Begin in January.

Health Inspectors Protect Citizens in the Purchase of Food.

Review of Tax Assessment Procedure Continues.

Water Demand Outstrips Population Increase.

Radar Traffic Enforcement Reduces Accidents.

Use of Surplus Provides Improvements in Service Without Tax Increase.

Major Sewer Collector Main Started in November.

Status of Projects or Inquiries Assigned by the City Council (brief status reports under the headings of "Projects Completed," "Projects Continued During the Month," and "New Projects Assigned in November Now in Progress.")

Manhattan Beach, California (semimonthly)

More About Taxes (the city's answer to newspapers stories which said Manhattan Beach had the highest tax rate in the Los Angeles area).

Sales Tax Administrative Costs Cut.

National Board of Fire Underwriters, Grading to Start.

Bouquets in the Mail (citizen praise for city employees).

Public Works Activities (progress report on public works programs).

Denial of Perkins Lot Split (report on planning commission recommendation).

Parking Requirements, 6th and Sepulveda (report on planning commission recommendation).

Regulation of Trailer Parking Under Study (report on planning commission discussion of problem of small trailers parked on streets, with notice that proposed ordinance will be submitted).

Personnel Notes (biographical information on selected city employees).

Phoenix, Arizona (weekly)

Planning for Papago Park Started (situation report on design of new park).

Plans for Swimming Pools Being Developed (gives locations at which pools are to be built).

Airsearch Increases Its Facilities at Sky Harbor (expansion of private firm at airport).

COPMEA Elects Officers (report on City of Phoenix Municipal Employees Association).

Cars of Arrested Motorists to be Towed (explanation of city council policy).

Bids Opened for 19th Avenue Storm Sewer (report on bid opening).